



Referendum open for cranberry growers

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Media Contact: Ann Marie Ames
608-224-5041 annmarie.ames@wi.gov

Jim Dick, Communications Director
608-224-5020 jim.dick@wi.gov

MADISON – Wisconsin cranberry growers have until Dec. 6 to vote in a referendum to allow their industry's marketing board the option of increasing the amount of money growers pay per barrel to support cranberry research and education over the next five years.

The Wisconsin Cranberry Marketing Board is holding a referendum regarding a proposed rule that would increase the maximum assessment the board could charge producers. If producers approve the referendum, the board could then vote whether to increase the fee from the current maximum of 10 cents per barrel to a maximum of 15 cents per barrel. That vote could take place as soon as the board got authorization – possibly late this year or early next year. Additionally, if producers approve the referendum, it would allow the board the option to vote to increase the fee to a maximum of 20 cents per barrel starting in 2017 and a maximum of 25 cents per barrel starting in 2019.

A “yes” vote does not guarantee the fee increase. It only gives the board permission to increase the assessment to the maximum proposed amounts if the board sees fit.

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) administers elections for the state's marketing boards, including the cranberry board. (DATCP) mailed ballots to eligible producers on Nov. 13. Those who do not receive a ballot by mail may contact DATCP's Stacie Ashby at 608-224-5116 or stacie.ashby@wisconsin.gov to request a ballot.

At least half of the state's affected producers must vote in the final referendum in order to validate the outcome of that vote. Of those, more than 50% must vote in favor of the referendum for the rule to be changed.

The election period for the referendum vote will take place from November 17th, 2014 to December 6th, 2014.

Wisconsin produces more cranberries than any other state in the nation. In 2012, Wisconsin growers produced 4.8 million barrels of cranberries. Cranberry is the state's No. 1 fruit crop in both value and acreage. The cranberry industry currently provides nearly \$300 million annually to the state's economy and supports approximately 3,400 jobs across the state.